

NASA Quarterly Community Workgroup Meeting #6
January 23, 2001
7PM – 9PM
Bettcher Room (2nd Floor of East Building)
BGSU Firelands

AGENDA

1. Introduction & Welcome – (Tim Polich/Susan Santos)
2. Review & Approval of October Meeting Minutes (Susan/Workgroup)
3. Review of Agenda - (Susan)
4. Update on Reactor Facility Decommissioning (Tim)
5. Completion and Release of Environmental Assessment (Mike Blotzer)
6. Presentation on Health and safety Training and Procedures on the Project
(Manny Dominquez)
7. Update on Community Outreach (Sally Harrington/Susan)
8. Other Issues and Future Meeting Topics (All)
9. Confirm Date and Discuss Possible New Location for Next Meeting (All)

Minutes of the NASA Community Workgroup Meeting, #6 January 23, 2001

The meeting began at 7 PM. Present were the following members: John Blakeman; Janet Bohne; Mark Bohne; Steve Casali; Rick Ennis; Ethel Roldan; Ralph Roshong and Bill Walker. NASA Personnel included: Tim Polich; Sally Harrington; Mike Blotzer; Manny Dominguez; Keith Peacock and Frank Greco. Wes Watson from the US Army Corps of Engineers, Bob Hysong from Argonne National Laboratories, Steve Reutcke and Keith Vermillion of Montgomery Watson, Dave Forth from SAIC and Susan Santos and Michael Morgan from FOCUS GROUP were also in attendance.

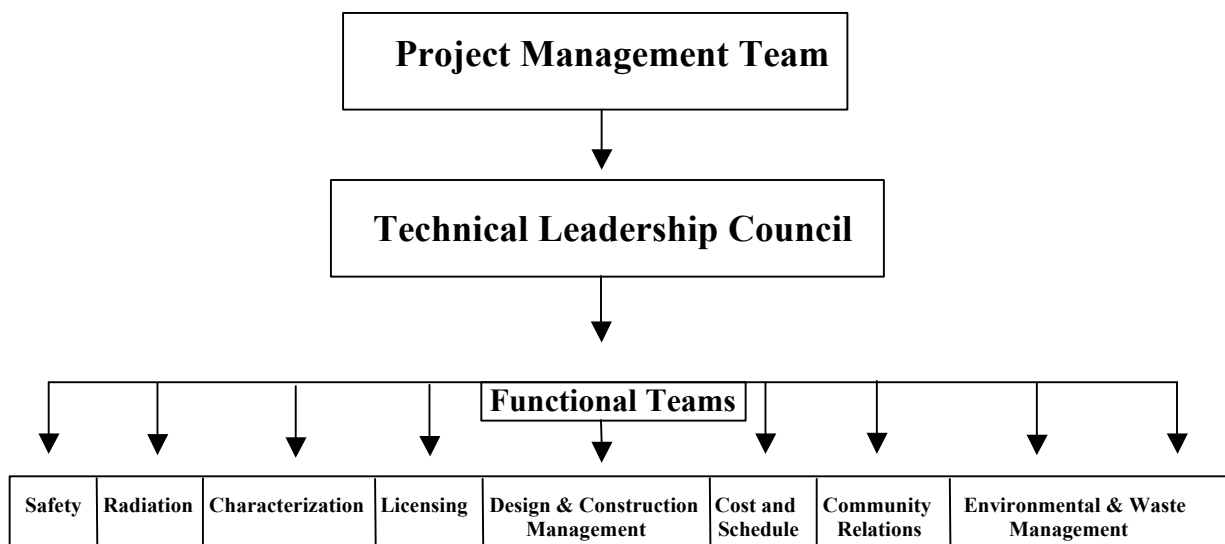
Tim Polich made opening remarks and Susan Santos followed with a brief discussion of the minutes of the previous meeting and the current meeting agenda. Both were approved by the Workgroup members.

Decommissioning Update

Tim gave a brief update on decommissioning observing, “We’re pretty excited about the direction we’re going in.” He briefly described the project team members.

- Federal Sector Team (NASA, Army Corps of Engineers – USACE, Argonne National Labs)
- Contractors (Montgomery Watson, Duke Engineering, MOTA Corporation and FOCUS GROUP)

Next Tim laid out the project management structure for the team and how the team would function using a “partnering” structure. The overall team management structure involves several layers as follows:



Tim discussed the decommissioning project goals agreed to by all the team members at the Partnering Session held in December and stressed the need for communication, understanding, commitment and performance as the keys to success. He noted, “Partnering is the process that gets us there.” NASA’s top goal for the project is to protect the safety and health of the public, the workers, and the environment.

Finally, Tim discussed the status of the NRC’s review of NASA’s decommissioning Plan. The NRC submitted a Request for Additional Information (RAI) to NASA in late December 2000 in several areas, including: the on-site consequences of radiological accidents; the decommissioning of the 100 kilowatt reactor; small amounts of contamination found in Pentolite Ditch near the confluence of Plum Brook; NASA’s Quality Assurance Program; describing the generation and disposal of liquid radioactive waste; and NASA’s emergency plans and procedures. NASA has 90 days from the request date to respond and expects to furnish all information to the NRC by the end of March.

Workgroup members commented on the NRC requests, with John Blakeman remarking that the NRC questions “seem to be minor details. If these are the only red flags going up....it’s a good sign to me.” Ethel Roldan asked about emergency plans in place at Plum Brook Station in case of an accident and was assured by Tim that the plans cover possible accidents including during waste transportation, tornadoes and other emergencies.

A member of the audience asked about “hot cells” within the Reactor Facility. Manny Dominguez said NASA was preparing a work plan on safety for “hot cell” removal. This led to a brief discussion of upcoming pre-decommissioning activities that will include removal of “hot cell” loose equipment, loose equipment from hot dry storage, and lead and asbestos removal. Keith Peecook emphasized that the NRC does not view these removal actions as part of decommissioning, but that predecommissioning activities give NASA the chance to see how the whole team is functioning prior to the start of decommissioning.

Environmental Assessment

Mike Blotzer presented the results of NASA’s Environmental Assessment (EA), which was to be made available for public review on January 26th. He explained that, based on the assessment, the Reactor Facility decommissioning would result in “No Significant Impact”

to the environment and local population. The small impacts noted would be confined to the work area at Plum Brook. Minor impacts would mainly result from controlled discharges in the air and water during the project and from slight increases in traffic as a result of decommissioning workforce growth.

Mike focused his presentation on the evaluation of potential radiation exposure to individual workers, nearby neighbors and the overall public during the project. In all cases, exposure would be extremely small and below federal regulations. Exposure to the overall population (the 80,000 residents of Erie County) will be extremely small - one millionth of a millirem (also known as 0.1 person rem). Mike placed this figure in relation to the “background” exposure that the average American has to radiation each year - approximately 300 millirems. Most of this exposure comes from the sun and naturally occurring radiation in the earth and lesser amounts from medical procedures and consumer products.

Decommissioning workers would have an average yearly exposure of less than 500 millirems per year – ten times less than the federal regulatory limit of 5,000 millirems. During shipping, the exposure level to workers would also be very low, 5 person rem, which is well below the regulatory limits of 5,000 millirems per year. During shipping of waste, the exposure to the public would be extremely small (0.5 person rem) and well below “background” levels. It is estimated that there will be 1-2 waste shipments per week, during a four-year period.

Mike Blotzer noted that NASA evaluated six different accident scenarios, which could lead to a release of radiation into the environment. In each case, exposure to the population beyond the fenceline of Plum Brook Station was estimated as less than 0.5 millirems. The US Environmental Protection Agency limit is 1,000 millirems. Mike also described several of the accident scenarios evaluated.

Ethel Roldan asked how serious an accident would have to be in order for the public to be notified, to which Mike replied “anything in free release.” Mike also noted that Ethel’s concerns about accidents and notification are “incredibly important to (NASA).” Susan Santos pointed out that NASA is currently considering a number of ways to keep the community informed throughout decommissioning including a telephone call-in line for the public to receive ongoing updates including any “incidents or accidents.” NASA may also consider a “call-out” line that would enable NASA to call out to Workgroup members, local officials, etc. The call-in line would update the public on decommissioning issues and note anything else taking place near Plum Brook, which the public might relate to decommissioning (e.g. trucks or noise from the road widening projects on Route 250 and Bogart Road).

Janet Bohne mentioned that the general public will likely know very little about radiological issues. She suggested that radiation monitoring badges could be purchased at a low cost and distributed to nearby neighbors and that NASA could “measure them every month” to assure people they had not been affected by decommissioning. Susan added that there will be continual monitoring taking place both on and outside of the work site. She also suggested that, at the next Workgroup meeting, the group discuss ways to keep the public informed during decommissioning and hear suggestions about monitoring.

The potential impacts on traffic were also evaluated in the EA. At the height of decommissioning, there would be another 60-65 workers on-site, beyond the normal 110 people working at Plum Brook Station, which would add to an increase in traffic, as would the addition of 1-2 trucks bearing waste shipments per week. Other issues addressed in the EA included Historical Significance, Emergency Preparedness and Impact on Endangered Species. Mike noted that although the State of Ohio is not planning to add the Reactor Facility to its List of Historic Places, NASA is nonetheless conducting an inventory of artifacts from the only reactor in NASA history. He also said NASA has prepared a plan for emergencies ranging from severe weather to fires and floods. While noting that Plum Brook Station has no endangered plant or animal species that would be impacted by the decommissioning, he said that NASA plans to re-vegetate the site with native plant species at the end of decommissioning.

Mike announced that the EA would be distributed to libraries throughout Erie County (including the Community Information Bank at the BGSU Firelands Library). A 30-day Public Comment period would begin on January 26, and would be advertised for three days in several local newspapers. He also said that he expected the EA to result in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in March.

Health and Safety

Manny Dominguez gave a presentation on Health and Safety, which includes four elements: Risk Management Process; Assessing Safety and Health Needs; Training Requirements and Monitoring. He said the health and safety plan for the decommissioning is “an evolving document,” adding that every task undertaken during decommissioning will have its own review.

Manny gave several examples of the steps involved in the risk management process which includes identifying all activities, their associated tasks and possible risks. Possible measures to prevent or minimize risks are also identified. Manny noted that the most significant risks workers might face are normal construction related risks and not radiation related. Next, he described health and safety needs, training requirements, personal protective equipment, requirements for monitoring decommissioning personnel and complying with regulatory agencies such as the Occupational Health and Safety Administration. Some of the extensive training workers will undergo includes:

- Hazardous Communications (including the Employee Right to Know Law)
- Hazardous Worker Operations (important for workers packaging the waste)
- Radiation Safety (including how to recognize hazards)
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Lockout/Tagout (involving work near high energy power lines)
- Working in Confined Spaces
- Emergency Procedures

Janet Bohne asked if workers would be X-rayed for bone density. Bob Hysong responded that they would not, though worker chest X-rays may be taken. Personal monitoring will include the use of “film badges” worn by workers.

Community Outreach

Sally Harrington said that fact sheets describing the results of the Environmental Assessment were being finalized for printing. They will be distributed to Community Workgroup members and local libraries (including the Community Information Bank at BGSU Firelands) and posted on the Decommissioning web site. She also said that NASA would do a mass mailing in February, to 1,300+ individuals and organizations, of a laminated postcard and magnet describing NASA's decommissioning community outreach efforts and the web site address for the project. A Perkins Public Schools group will assist NASA with the mailing. Susan suggested to Workgroup members that they let Sally know of anyone else who should receive the mailing, and any groups that may be interested in assisting with future mailings in return for a small stipend.

Workgroup Members and Meetings

Susan told current Workgroup members that they would soon receive a letter from Tim thanking them for their participation and asking if members want to continue their participation or leave the group but remain informed. Susan also noted that NASA wants to expand workgroup membership and asked the Workgroup members present to make suggestions on new members. Several individuals were mentioned for possible membership:

- Carol Andres, former president of the Firelands Audubon Society
- Larry Pitts, Superintendent, Perkins Public Schools
- Rick Graham, Erie County chapter organizer, Izaak Walton Society
- Deborah Alex-Saunders, local resident
- Robert and Linda Wheeler, local residents

Susan also asked Workgroup members for suggestions on other possible locations for Workgroup meetings and future Community Information Sessions. While NASA will continue to schedule some meetings at BGSU Firelands, Susan spoke of NASA's commitment to reach out to all segments of the Erie County community, including meetings in different venues. Locations suggested by members included local community churches in Sundusky, the EHOVE Career Center in Milan, the Perkins Schools and NASA Plum Brook. Tim noted that security at PBS might make it inconvenient for a Workgroup meeting, but that NASA was committed to having some public function related to decommissioning there.

Next Meeting

Susan suggested that the next Workgroup meeting be held on Tuesday, April 24 and the Workgroup concurred. The meeting will start at 7 PM and the location will be announced in March. Susan asked for possible topics of discussion and suggestions included: describing NASA's environmental baseline survey; radiation exposure levels and protection plans; how to communicate during decommissioning and ideas on monitoring. Finally, Susan announced that NASA Plum Brook would seek to hire a full-time community relations professional to support the decommissioning project and asked the attendees to let her know if they knew any possible candidates.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.